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Chapter 8

CYBER-BULLYING: THE IRISH EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Good indications as to the incidence rates concerning bullying, aggressive behaviour and violence in schools have been developed both in Ireland (Minton & O' Moore, 2008; O' Moore, Kirkham & Smith, 1997; O' Moore & Minton, 2003) and internationally (see Smith, 2003; Smith et al., 1999, for reviews). However, very few empirically-based surveys of cyber-bullying (Li, 2006; Smith et al., 2006; Vandebosch et al., 2006) have been conducted (Minton, 2008). The present chapter will report on a study of 2, 794 students from eight post-primary schools in the Republic of Ireland (the entire student body of the first, second, third and fourth years – ca. 12 – 16 years of age) who completed a specially-designed 38-item questionnaire, administered according to standardised instructions by class teachers in normal school time. Across the sample, around one in seven students reported having been cyber-bullied over the past couple of months, and around one in eleven reported having taken part in the cyber-bullying of others at school within the past couple of months. Incidence rates of having been subjected to and having perpetrated sub-categories of cyber-bullying were also obtained (text message bullying, the sending of pictures and video clips via mobile telephones, threatening calls, e-mails, Instant Messages, and abuse via the Internet (social networking sites and chat rooms) were also obtained. In many sub-categories of cyber-abuse (see below) the incidence rates were slightly higher amongst girls than they were amongst boys. A further finding was that the use of social networking Internet sites was very frequent, with over three-quarters of the sample having used Bebo and You Tube within the past couple of months. Few people who had been cyber-bullied (about 6 per cent) reported it to adults at school; they were over twice as likely to do nothing at all, five times more likely to send an angry message back, and five times more likely to talk to a friend. The findings confirm that the incidence of cyber-bullying amongst post-primary students in schools in Ireland is significant, and that its seriousness as an issue should not be underestimated.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades in particular, good indications as to the incidence rates concerning general bullying and aggressive behaviour in schools have been developed both in Ireland (Minton & O' Moore, 2008; O' Moore, Kirkham & Smith, 1997; O' Moore & Minton, 2003) and internationally (see Smith, 2003; Smith et al., 1999, for reviews. For example, a nationwide survey of bullying behaviour conducted in 1993 – 1994 that involved a representative sample of some 20,422 students (9,599 primary and 10,843 post-primary) in Irish schools recorded that 31.2 per cent of the primary students, and 15.6 per cent of the post-primary students, reported having been bullied over the previous three months (O' Moore, Kirkham & Smith, 1997). More recently, a large (2, 312 primary and 3, 257 post-primary students) although not nationally representative survey, conducted in 2004 – 2005, funded by the *Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences* (IRCHSS), showed that bullying behaviour in Irish schools continues to be a problem. Of the primary school pupils involved in this second survey, 29.2 per cent reported having been bullied within the last three months, as did 22.9 per cent of their post-primary counterparts (Minton & O' Moore, 2008). Ireland is one of three countries nationwide that can point to nationwide survey data - the others being Australia and Norway (Minton & O' Moore, 2004). Large-scale survey data concerning both school bullying (Minton & O' Moore, 2004; Smith et al., 1999) and school violence (Smith, 2003) now exist in most EU States and beyond.

By way of contrast, very few empirically-based surveys of cyber-bullying have been conducted (Minton, 2007a, 2008), although considerable public and media awareness can be inferred to exist around this issue, often concerning its most tragic possible consequences: suicide (e.g., Bramwell & Mussen, 2003; Fleming, 2004; Riegel, 2007; Toppo, 2006). The most frequently cited empirical studies to date have generally been exploratory in nature, and hence utilized rather limited sample sizes (e.g., Li, 2006; Smith, 2006) or have addressed text message bullying only (NCH / Tesco, 2005). UK surveys have indicated that around one in five teenagers have been bullied via text message (NCH / Tesco, 2005), or cyber-bullied (Smith et al., 2006). From the limited evidence that currently exists, Minton (2008) concluded that '...the seriousness of cyber-bullying can not and should not be underestimated....[whereas] there are points of similarity with 'traditional' forms of bullying, cyber-bullying presents fresh challenges'.

DEFINING CYBER-BULLYING

Cyber-bullying, often previously known as 'E-bullying' (with the 'E' denoting 'electronic' forms of contact; e.g., O' Moore & Minton, 2004) has been defined as:

'...an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him- or herself.' (Smith et al., 2006).

This definition was provided by Professor Peter K. Smith, who has conducted one of the first systematic studies of cyber-bullying, and one which will be regularly referred to

throughout this chapter. It is essentially an extension of how ‘traditional’ (i.e., non cyber) forms have bullying behaviour have generally been defined; i.e., on the basis of *deliberate*, *unprovoked* and *repeated* acts of *aggression*, conducted by an individual or group that has a *power advantage* over the target(s) of that behaviour (O’ Moore & Minton, 2004). However, Vandebosch et al. (2006) assert that there are a number of important differences between ‘classic’ bullying and cyber-bullying. In the first place:

‘With cyberbullying, it is not necessarily the case that the victim is harassed repeatedly. A defamatory website, for example, will often stay online for a longer period of time and can, moreover, be read by many individuals. A spoken insult, by contrast, disappears from the moment it is uttered, and is only heard by those present at the time’ (Vandebosch et al., 2006, p. 1).

This line of argument would seem to us to prompt one to consider where the ‘repetition’ lies; in this sort of instance of cyber-bullying, the *perpetrator’s act* of posting offensive material is a one-off event, but due to the possibility of multiple viewers and viewing, the *target’s experience* of being abused is one of repetition.¹ Vandebosch et al. (2006) also point out that technological know-how is the way in which power is exerted in cyber-bullying, rather than physical strength (as in physical acts of ‘classic’ bullying); that it is ‘....easier to assume or adopt an other or a fake identity’ on-line; and that one cannot see the perpetrator’s facial expression, nor hear his or her intonation, in an act of cyber-bullying (Vandebosch et al., 2006, p. 1).

In their study, Smith et al. (2006) identified seven sub-categories of cyber-bullying behaviour, which are:

- Text-message bullying, also known as SMS, bullying;
- Bullying by the taking, sending and publication of photographs or video-clips via mobile phone cameras. This may involve so-called ‘happy slapping’ attacks, in which a gang may film themselves attacking random passers-by, or targeted individuals;
- Phone call bullying via mobile phones. This can involve the theft and use of another’s phone in an attempt to make him or her appear culpable;
- E-mail bullying;
- Chat-room bullying;
- Bullying through Instant Messaging (IM); and,
- Bullying via Web-sites. This may include the use of defamatory blogs, personal web-sites, on-line personal polling sites, general polling sites, and also the misuse of certain social networking sites (e.g., ‘My Space’, ‘You Tube’, ‘Bebo’) for the purposes of bullying.

¹ A similar point is made in a definition of workplace bullying developed by A.M. O’Moore for use in medico-legal assessments (O’Moore & Mc Guire 2001). The definition states that, “Bullying is negative behaviour, which can be direct and indirect, verbal, non-verbal or physical, initiated or conducted by one or more persons against another or others in a systematic and ongoing manner. Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour can also be described as bullying if they are unjustified and serve to intimidate on an ongoing basis.”

Two of Smith's sub-categories (the first and the last in the list above; i.e., text-message (SMS) bullying and bullying via web-sites) have been fairly frequently reported in the media over the past two years in Ireland (Minton, 2007a, 2008; also, e.g., Riegel, 2007). The evidence, such as it exists, on these two forms of cyber-bullying, will now be presented below.

TEXT-MESSAGE (SMS) BULLYING: THE EVIDENCE

From what little empirical information that exists on the matter, text-message bullying appears to be the most common form of cyber-bullying. In a small-scale study in Sacramento, California, self-identified cyber-bullies preferred it 2:1 over e-mail, web-sites, and Instant Messaging (Toppo, 2006). Similarly, in the UK, Smith et al.'s 2006 study of ninety two 11-16 year-old students revealed that text-message bullying was the type of cyber-bullying that had been most frequently experienced. In a larger British study, around one-fifth of 900 students in their early teens study had been bullied via text-message (NCH / Tesco, 2005).

So what is the picture regarding text-message bullying in Ireland? The study that is described in this chapter is the first that has been specifically focussed upon text-message bullying or cyber-bullying. However, questions concerning text-message bullying have been asked as a part of more general studies of bullying behaviour amongst school students. In a survey of bullying behaviour amongst 2, 354 primary school students (3rd – 6th class), from 38 schools, were asked to indicate whether 'other pupils have sent nasty text messages to me, or used mobile phones to get at me' within the last three months. Around one in ten - 8.7 per cent of girls, and 10.8 per cent of boys – indicated yes, that this had happened to them at least once in the last three months. When 3, 078 post-primary students (1st – 3rd year), from 12 schools, were asked the same question, over one in eight girls (13.3 per cent) and around one in ten boys (9.6 per cent) indicated that this had happened to them at least once in the past three months (Minton, 2007b).

Although no scientifically-based research on the matter has been conducted to date, from media coverage and anecdotal evidence alone, text-message bullying may be considered to be as potentially psychologically dangerous as any other form of bullying. At what is surely the most extreme end of psychological danger posed through bullying, Neil Marr and Tim Field (2001) have coined the term 'bullycide'. This refers to when a person is literally 'bullied to death' – that is to say, when he or she takes his or her own life rather than face another day of being bullied. Marr & Field (2001) state that, at a conservative estimate, sixteen children (under the age of sixteen years-old) in the United Kingdom per year commit 'bullycide'. Bramwell & Mussen (2003) have reported on the 'bullycide' of a sixteen year-old male due to text-message bullying in New Zealand; similarly, in the United Kingdom, Fleming (2004) has reported on a fourteen year-old female 'bullycide' due to text-message bullying in Liverpool. In Ireland, in March 2007, the tragic suicide of 18 year-old Leanne Wolfe was preceded by a few hours by a vicious text message from a member of a six-strong gang who had persecuted her through physical assaults, emotional intimidation, web-postings and text-messages for some five years. Leanne's bravery, and the bully gang's thuggery and cowardice, were recorded in diaries that were found on the day that she was buried (Riegel, 2007).

WEB-BASED BULLYING: THE EVIDENCE

A recent survey (Webwise & Anchor, 2007) showed that 69 per cent of 848 nine to sixteen year-old students in Ireland access social networking web-sites more frequently than three times per week, and one-third do so on a daily basis. Hence, the potential for broad-scale cyber-abuse is evident. In Canada, Qing Li's 2006 study of 177 seventh graders recorded that 54 per cent of the students reported having been bullied, and 25 per cent reported having been cyber-bullied. Also, 33 per cent reported having bullied others, and 15 per cent reported having cyber-bullied others. Furthermore, most targets of both bullying and cyber-bullying did not report having been bullied. The non-reporting of bullying behaviour amongst young people has been identified as a major inhibitor of the effective dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour (O' Moore, Kirkham & Smith, 1997) and a phenomenon which has generally been unaffected by the implementation of most intervention programmes (Smith, Pepler & Rigby, 2004). On these grounds, perhaps, it is understandable that Li referred to a 'new bottle, but old wine'.

In the study of 92 11-16 year-old students undertaken for the United Kingdom's Anti-Bullying Alliance, Smith et al. (2006) found that 20 students (22 per cent of the sample) had experienced cyber-bullying at least once, and that 5 students (6.6 per cent) had experienced cyber-bullying frequently in the last two months. Of the seven sub-categories referred to above, phone call bullying, text-message bullying and e-mail bullying were the most common types, and chat-room bullying was the least common. Video-clip / phone calls were perceived by the students as having more impact than 'traditional' (that is to say, 'non-cyber') bullying. Web-site bullying and text-message bullying were perceived as having the same impact as traditional bullying, and chat-room bullying, Instant Messaging bullying and E-mail bullying were perceived as having less impact than traditional bullying. There were few age differences; however, girls were more likely to be cyber-bullied than boys (especially via text-messages) (Smith et al., 2006).

Vandebosch et al. (2006) reported on a large-scale study of cyber-bullying, undertaken by the University of Antwerp (at the request of the Flemish Institute for Science and Technology Assessment, in turn at the request of the Committee for Culture, Youth, Sport and the Media of the Flemish Parliament) in October 2005.² The study involved 636 primary school students, and 1,416 secondary school students who undertook a questionnaire on their 'use of the Internet and mobile phones and their personal experiences with traditional and cyber-bullying' (Vandebosch et al., 2006, p. 2). When asked directly (in the questionnaire) about having been involved in cyber-bullying, one in ten reported having been victims, almost two in ten reported having been perpetrators, and about three in ten reported having been bystanders. However, when the '...number of youngsters who [had] come into contact with at least one form of potentially offensive behaviour over the Internet or mobile phone that can be classified as related to cyber-bullying over the last three months' (p. 5) was examined, 61.9 per cent reported having been victims, 52.5 per cent reported having been perpetrators, and 76.3 per cent reported having been bystanders (Vandebosch et al., 2006).

² Cyber-bullying has been well represented in the Flemish media. The 2008 film, 'Ben X', was based on the true story of a teenage boy with mild autism, who committed suicide by jumping off Gravensteen Castle in Ghent, Flanders. The book 'Niets was alles wat hij zei' ['Nothing was all that he said'] was the basis for the film's screenplay; Nic Balthazar was both the author of the novel, and the director of the film (Boylan, 2008).

Whilst little in the way of broad-scale data on cyber-bullying exists, and, hitherto, very little in Ireland, action has been taken on deciding what can and should be done regarding the problem, and steps towards resource provision in Ireland have been made. It is towards these topics that we now turn our attention.

WHAT CAN AND SHOULD BE DONE ABOUT CYBER-BULLYING

Smith et al. (2006) have suggested certain guidelines concerning dealing with cyber-bullying in schools. At the *school management level*, Smith et al. (2006) advocate that cyber-bullying should be included in school anti-bullying policy. Managers should ensure that teachers have enough knowledge to deal with cyber-bullying, and can tell students about cyber-safety. Furthermore, schools should work with police and other support agencies (i.e., counselling services) on preventing and dealing with cyber-bullying, and parents and students should be updated and involved in forming new anti-bullying strategies. At the *school teaching staff level*, Smith et al. (2006) advocate that staff should be familiar with their roles and responsibilities in implementing anti-bullying policies; they should be able to take action if a child is cyber-bullied, and to teach young people e-etiquette and cyber-safety. *Parents* should make sure that they and their children are aware of the risks of technology use, and that they know what to do if the child is bullied. Smith et al. (2006) also advise that parental control software for home computers should also be considered.

Smith et al. (2006) advise that *targeted young people*, should remember that regardless of the excuses that bullies use to justify their unacceptable behaviour, that being bullied is never one's own fault – bullying is always the fault of the perpetrator of that behaviour. Bullying should never be ignored; however, it is important to try and keep calm, rather than just reacting. In the case of phone call, E-mail, text-message and video-clip bullying, messages and images should not be deleted, but kept as evidence. Non-response is important; it may be worth turning off incoming texts for a few days, or to change one's number. If one is being bullied via phone calls, the advice is not to hang up right away (this may gratify the callers sadistic need to cause fear) but to walk away, and to hang up after a few minutes. In terms of Internet-based bullying, Smith et al. (2006) advise that young people should never respond to 'flames' (unwanted e-mails), or open files from people they don't know. For E-mail bullying, incidents should be reported to the Internet Service Provider; and for Web-Site Bullying, the on-line safety links should be followed. Smith et al. (2006) also advise young people that in using Instant Messaging, Internet Chat Rooms or Social Networking Web-sites, it is important to remember to never give out personal details, photos etc. (use a nickname), and to recognise that who you think you are communicating with on-line might not actually be that person. Young people are advised by Smith et al. (2006) to think very carefully about what they write, and tell their parents or teachers if they are worried.

CYBER-BULLYING: THE RESPONSE IN IRELAND

Gratifyingly, and somewhat in contrast to the more general phenomenon of school bullying (Minton, 2006), cyber-bullying (at least, as an issue grounded within the broader

area of Internet safety) has been fairly strongly prioritised at the governmental level in Ireland. Following the publication of *the Report of the Working Group on the Illegal and Harmful Use of the Internet* in July 1998, the *Internet Advisory Board* was established in February, 2000. The Board was chaired by an independent chairperson, and its members included representatives from the Internet Service Providers Industry Association of Ireland, An Garda Síochána,³ child protection interests, relevant government departments, the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner, and the National Consultative Committee on Racism in Ireland (NCCRI). In 2007, the government approved a proposal by the Minister for Justice, Equality & Law Reform to ‘....strengthen the internet safety framework with the establishment of the *Office for Internet Safety* (OIS), which was established in March 2008 (as an Executive Office of the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform) ‘....to further strengthen cohesion across government departments and bodies and provide for a more effective and transparent enforcement structure in relation to the Industry Code of Practice and Ethics’ (Office for Internet Safety, 2008a). The OIS has ‘....primary responsibility for the development and promotion of strategic actions to promote the highest possible levels of internet safety’. Its key roles include (Office for Internet Safety, 2008a):

- ‘The promotion of Internet Safety, particularly in relation to combating child pornography;⁴
- Oversight of the Internet Hotline (www.hotline.ie) – the system for dealing with reports of illegal content on the internet;⁵
- Monitoring and overseeing the industry code of practice;⁶
- The development of Internet safety awareness campaigns’.

This latter function has been exemplified in the production of a series of booklets between September 2007 and April 2008: ‘*A Parents’ Guide to New Media Technologies*’ and ‘*A Parent’s Guide to Filtering Technologies*’ (both 20th September, 2007); ‘*A Parents’ Guide to Social-Networking Websites*’ (18th February, 2008); and ‘*Get With IT! Leaflet - Internet Safety for Parents*’ (16th April, 2008) (Office for Internet Safety, 2008a). On 9th December, 2008, the Minister for Justice, Equality & Law Reform, Mr. Dermot Ahern T.D., launched the fourth (and, in the context of the current chapter, most relevant yet) booklet in the ‘GET with IT!’ series, ‘*A Guide to Cyberbullying*’ (Office for Internet Safety, 2008b). The booklet ‘....offers measured and practical advice on cyber-bullying and is intended to increase awareness of all aspects of cyber-bullying – how to identify it, how to prevent it, and

3 The national police force of the Republic of Ireland; the Irish term literally translates as ‘the guardians of peace’.

4 It has been suggested that the term ‘child abusive imagery’ should replace the term ‘child pornography’ ‘....due to a fear amongst professionals that the continued use of this phrase [child pornography] might serve to legitimise material and lead to comparisons with “adult” material, which is seen as acceptable’ (Blows, 2008, p. 13). We would suggest ‘child sexual abuse imagery’ as a desired term, and for the same reasons as Blows outlines, further deplore the term ‘kiddie porn’, which has seen use in British tabloid newspapers.

5 This Hotline has been operated by the Internet Service Providers Association of Ireland (ISPAI) since November 1999, and is part financed by the European Commission’s Safer Internet Plus Programme (Office for Internet Safety, 2008a). It is part of a world-wide network (known as INHOPE) of 29 similar entities, and received 2, 600 calls in 2006 (Durrant & Boulton, 2008). There is also a Hotline.ie web-site, which provides information on creating Internet safety for children; its target audience is parents and other concerned individuals (Durrant & Boulton, 2008).

6 The OIS closely monitors and keeps under review the operation of the Industry’s Code of Practice to ensure and proactively encourage the highest levels of compliance’ (Office for Internet Safety, 2008a).

how to respond before things escalate' (Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform, 2008) and was sponsored by the O2 telecommunications company. The content of the booklet resulted from co-operation between the *National Centre for Technology in Education* and *Barnardos* (a children's charity)⁷, and was reviewed via an expert review group convened by the Office for Internet Safety (Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform, 2008). At the launch, the Minister noted, insightfully, that:

'Technology opens up a world of opportunities for young people, but it also presents hazards. Cyber-bullying is a particularly nasty consequence of technological development.... Cyberbullying can happen any time and any place and for many children and young people, home is no longer a safe haven from bullying.' [Furthermore], '....the growth in the use of the Internet, including the use of social-networking sites by young people is a key concern for parents today.... this booklet will be of assistance and is designed to educate and assist parents and others interested in children's welfare in understanding cyber-bullying and reducing the risk of cyber-bullying' (Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform, 2008).

In recent weeks, the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform has formally established and appointed the *Internet Safety Advisory Council* with effect from December 1st 2008. At the time of writing (December, 2008) it is anticipated that the first meeting of the Council will take place in early January 2009 (Office for Internet Safety, 2008a). The membership of the Internet Safety Advisory Council is drawn from '....representatives of the key stake holders in the statutory, industry and community sectors', and its role is to '....support the work of the OIS by providing expert advice and analysis and by identifying emerging areas of concern' (Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform, 2008). Specifically, and as a primarily advisory body, the Internet Safety Advisory Council will have the following responsibilities (Office for Internet Safety, 2008a):

- 'To advise the OIS on all aspects of internet safety, particularly as it relates to children;
- 'To contribute to the monitoring and implementation of EU and UN decisions relating to internet safety;
- 'To contribute to monitoring and evaluation of the self –regulation framework to ensure a safer internet environment;
- 'To advise on priorities for research in this field;
- 'To advise on awareness raising in addressing illegal and harmful use of the internet;
- 'To advise on the development of mechanisms to engage with the key players;
- 'To examine and assess the current approaches both domestically and internationally to addressing the problem of illegal and harmful use of the Internet'.

⁷ Barnardo's has also produced its own set of guidelines for practitioners in reducing risks for child users of technology. They advocate (i) attention being paid to the location of the computer in the home / school / educational setting; (ii) the understanding of so-called 'netiquette'; (iii) the role of parental permission; (iv) mindfulness of the practitioner's role; (v) the use of filtering software; and, (vi) setting ground rules re: passwords, personal information, care on downloading, non-response to suggestive, obscene or harassing messages and postings (Canavan Corr, 2006).

The *National Centre for Technology in Education* (NCTE) has established a post-service training course for teachers, and (in consultation with the SPHE⁸ curriculum support team (Walsh, 2008)) developed a web-site called *Webwise.ie*, which contains information on Internet safety for teachers, parents and children (Durrant & Boulton, 2008). A '*Webwise Internet Safety Education Pack*' was sent to every school in Ireland in March 2007, which contained advice booklets and hard-hitting posters (Walsh, 2008). The NCTE has also developed in-service training courses for teachers on 'Integrating Internet safety into teaching and learning' and 'Bebo: What's going on' (Walsh, 2008). On 12th February, 2008 (Safer Internet Day), the NCTE launched a three-part '*Complete E-safety Programme*'. The first of these three parts is the availability of a resource pack consisting of thirteen Internet safety lessons (downloadable from www.webwise.ie), aimed at teachers and students. Three of these lessons addressed cyber-bullying – including awareness around bullying, cyberbullying and the impact / consequences of these, advice on what to do if one is being cyber-bullied, and the highlighting of the critical role of the bystander. There are also links to the NCTE's teen-advice site, www.watchyourspace.ie. The second aspect is the development of an SPHE in-service session for teachers; thirdly, and in conjunction with the National Parents' Council (NPC), there is the possibility of the provision of a free Internet Safety speaker for parents' evenings (i.e., a parents' Internet safety seminar) (Walsh, 2008). In launching the E-safety programme, the former Minister for Education and Science, Ms. Mary Hanafin, T.D. said:

'This new initiative will support parents and schools in assisting our children to develop the new life skills necessary to ensure safe and worthwhile experiences with Internet technologies' (Walsh, 2008, p. 24).

However laudable recent policy / legislative actions and resource provision regarding Internet safety have been in Ireland, one has to concede that, at least as regards cyber-bullying, such recommendations and actions have been made in the absence of large-scale empirical data regarding the issue – for the quite simple reason that no such data has, hitherto, been available. It is for this reason that we can now turn our attention to the findings of a recent (May, 2008) survey conducted by the present authors, and their colleagues at Trinity College Dublin's Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre.

METHODOLOGY

Background

The current survey was arrived at after consultation between members of the national broadcaster, *Radio Telefís Éireann's 'Prime Time'*⁹ team, and personnel of Trinity College Dublin's Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre. The sample size of the current survey

8 The Social and Personal Health Education Programme (SPHE) was developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, at the request of the Irish government's Department of Education and Science. SPHE is taught at both primary and post-primary levels during discrete SPHE time and across the curriculum. The SPHE curriculum is both skills- and knowledge-based, and focussed around the promotion of self-esteem, general well-being, social skills, and physical, emotional and mental health (Coyle, 2000).

9 A popular peak-time extended news / investigative documentary programme in Ireland.

was almost thirty times as large as that of the most frequently cited international survey of cyber-bullying (Smith et al., 2006). It was intended that the dissemination of the results of the survey, coupled with further investigatory research into this issue, would assist in the development of evidence-based intervention strategies into what, on the basis of anecdotal evidence, would appear to be at present a little understood but particularly destructive form of interpersonal behaviour.

Participants

2, 794 twelve to sixteen year-old students (907 girls (32.5 per cent of the sample) and 1, 884 boys (67.5 per cent of the sample)) from eight post-primary schools (the entire student body of the first, second, third and fourth years) completed a specially-constructed questionnaire. Nine schools within the Irish Republic were invited to participate in the survey. The sample was framed in order to reflect nationwide trends in school characteristics across seven measures – (i) fee paying / non-fee-paying; (ii) type (i.e., secondary, VEC, comprehensive)¹⁰; (iii) gender of pupils (boys only, girls only, co-educational); (iv) designated as serving an area of disadvantage, or otherwise¹¹; (v) size (i.e., number of pupils enrolled); and, (vi) geographical location, according to the most recent governmental statistics available (typically, 2006 – 2007). Eight schools returned data in time within the agreed time limit (i.e., a completion rate of 88.9 per cent

Materials and Procedure

A 38-item questionnaire was designed especially for this survey by the authors. The questionnaire was administered (according to standardised instructions provided by the authors) by class teachers in normal school time. Essentially, students were to be seated in such a way that conferring or copying should be avoided, the questions were to be answered anonymously, and the importance of answering the questions truthfully was to be communicated to the students. Whilst no time limit for the completion of the questionnaires was to be set, it was possible in all cases to distribute, give instructions, have the students complete, and collect up the copies of the questionnaire within a single class period (40 minutes). The questionnaires were returned by the schools to the for data entry and analysis by the authors and team at Trinity College Dublin's Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre. Due to the higher proportion of boys (67.5 per cent) than girls (32.5 per cent) in the sample, data for the two genders are expressed separately in the results tables that follow.

10 There are four types of second-level education establishments in Ireland – i.e., those that typically enrol students between 12 and 18 years of age – secondary schools (ca. 59 per cent), vocational schools (ca. 32 per cent), comprehensive schools and community schools (ca. 9 per cent) (Jordan, 1999).

11 Schools in Ireland are designated as serving areas of disadvantage, or otherwise, according to socio-economic and educational indicators such as high levels of unemployment, social housing, and low levels of literacy and numeracy in the area (O'Moore & Minton, 2003). Status as serving an area of disadvantage renders a school eligible for various funding and staffing opportunities under governmental initiatives that seek to address equality of access and opportunity in education.

Table 1. Incidence rates of general bullying behaviour. Students' responses to questions, 'How often have you been bullied and bullied others at school in the past couple of months (any kind of bullying, including cyber-bullying?)' (Percentages).

Student Category	Response Category				
	Not in the past couple of months*	Once or twice	Two or three times a month	About once a week	Several times a week
Been bullied:					
Females	69.7	22.6	4.0	1.8	2.0
Males	69.9	21.2	3.3	2.8	2.7
TOTAL	69.8	21.7	3.5	2.5	2.5
Bullied others:					
Females	87.5	10.1	1.4	0.8	0.2
Males	69.1	24.3	3.1	2.0	1.4
TOTAL	75.1	19.7	2.6	1.6	1.0

* This column heading should be taken as, 'I have not been bullied / cyber-bullied [as appropriate to the table] in the past couple of months' throughout the rest of the results tables.

Table 2. Incidence rates of cyber-bullying behaviour. Students' responses to the questions, 'How often have you been cyber-bullied and cyber-bullied others in the past couple of months?' (Percentages).

Student Category	Response Category				
	Not in the past couple of months	Once or twice	Two or three times a month	About once a week	Several times a week
Been cyber-bullied:					
Females	81.9	14.9	1.5	1.1	0.6
Males	87.7	9.7	0.9	0.6	1.0
TOTAL	85.8	11.4	1.1	0.8	0.9
Table 2. (Continued)					
Cyber-bullied others:					
Females	92.0	7.4	0.2	0.2	0.2
Males	90.9	7.0	0.8	0.6	0.7
TOTAL	91.3	7.1	0.6	0.5	0.5

RESULTS

1. General Bullying Behaviour

The results of this study would appear to confirm the continued existence (see Minton & O' Moore, 2008; O' Moore, Kirkham & Smith, 1997) of significant bully / victim problems in Irish schools, with some 30.2 per cent of students (30.3 per cent of girls, and 30.1 per cent

of boys) reporting that they had been bullied at school in the past couple of months, and 24.9 per cent of students (11.5 per cent of girls, and 30.9 per cent of boys) reported having taken part in bullying of others at school in the past couple of months.

2. Cyber-Bullying Behaviour

Probably chief amongst the findings of this survey was that in the sample as a whole, averaged across all age and gender groups, around one in seven students (14.2 per cent; reported having been cyber-bullied over the past couple of months. This figure was higher (18.1 per cent) amongst girls, than it was amongst boys (12.3 per cent). Around one in eleven (8.7 per cent; 8.0 per cent of girls, and 9.1 per cent of boys) reported having taken part in the cyber-bullying of others at school within the past couple of months. It was also noted that in many sub-categories of cyber-abuse (see below), that the incidence rates were slightly higher amongst girls than they were amongst boys.

3. Abusive Text Messages

(a) Abusive text messages in school

Table 3. Incidence rates of abusive text messages in schools. Students' responses to the questions, 'Have you been sent, and have you sent others, a nasty, aggressive or threatening text message in school in the past couple of months?' (Percentages).

Student Category	Response Category				
	Not in the past couple of months	Once or twice	Two or three times a month	About once a week	Several times a week
Been sent:					
Females	89.1	9.0	1.2	0.6	0.1
Males	92.4	6.2	0.3	0.4	0.6
TOTAL	91.3	7.1	0.6	0.5	0.5
Sent others:					
Females	95.8	3.5	0.4	0.1	0.2
Males	95.0	3.9	0.2	0.5	0.5
TOTAL	95.2	3.8	0.3	0.4	0.4

(b) Abusive text messages outside of school

Text message bullying was a problem inasmuch as 16.5 per cent of students reported having received an abusive text outside of school in the past couple of months, and 10.7 per cent having sent such a message. School restrictions on the use of mobile telephones would seem to be having a positive effect – within school, these incidences were 8.7 per cent and 4.8 per cent respectively.

Table 4. Incidence rates of abusive text messages outside school. Students' responses to the questions, 'Have you been sent, and have you sent others, a nasty, aggressive or threatening text message outside of school in the past couple of months?' (Percentages).

Student Category	Response Category				
	Not in the past couple of months	Once or twice	Two or three times a month	About once a week	Several times a week
Been sent:					
Females	79.2	17.0	2.4	1.0	0.4
Males	85.7	12.0	1.1	0.5	0.9
TOTAL	83.5	13.6	1.5	0.6	0.7
Sent others:					
Females	89.2	9.9	0.1	0.3	0.4
Males	89.4	8.7	0.5	0.5	0.9
TOTAL	89.3	9.1	0.4	0.4	0.7

Table 5. Incidence rates of the sending of taking and sending abusive pictures and / or video clips via mobile telephones..

Student Category	Response Category				
	Not in the past couple of months	Once or twice	Two or three times a month	About once a week	Several times a week
Students' responses to the question, 'Have other people taken a mobile 'phone camera picture of you that you think is threatening or embarrassing in the past couple of months?' (Percentages).					
Females	82.0	16.8	0.7	0.1	0.4
Males	82.6	15.1	1.2	0.4	0.6
TOTAL	82.4	15.6	1.0	0.3	0.5
Students' responses to the question, 'Have other people sent a mobile 'phone camera picture of you to others that you think is threatening or embarrassing in the past couple of months?' (Percentages).					
Females	92.6	6.7	0.3	0.1	0.3
Males	89.1	9.1	0.8	0.3	0.9
TOTAL	90.2	8.3	0.6	0.2	0.7
Students' responses to the question, 'Have you taken a mobile 'phone camera picture of others that they would think is threatening or embarrassing in the past couple of months?' (Percentages).					
Females	87.8	11.1	0.7	0.2	0.2
Males	82.5	15.5	0.8	0.6	0.7
TOTAL	84.1	14.1	0.7	0.5	0.5
Students' responses to the question, 'Have you sent a mobile 'phone camera picture of others that they would think is threatening or embarrassing in the past couple of months?' (Percentages).					
Females	95.2	4.3	0.1	0.1	0.2
Males	91.9	6.3	0.9	0.2	0.7
TOTAL	93.0	5.7	0.6	0.2	0.5

4. Taking and Sending Abusive Pictures and / or Video Clips via Mobile Telephones

The use of mobile telephones in the taking or sending of embarrassing or otherwise nasty pictures or video clips also raises concerns. 17.6 per cent reported that they had had embarrassing or nasty pictures or video clips taken of them; 15.9 per cent reported having taken such pictures or clips of others, although rather fewer (7.0 per cent) reported that they had sent such images on.

5. Abusive Calls from Mobile Telephones

Table 6. Incidence rates of abusive calls from mobile telephones. Students' responses to the questions, 'Have you received, and have you made, a nasty, aggressive or threatening telephone call from a mobile phone in the past couple of months?' (Percentages).

Student Category	Response Category				
	Not in the past couple of months	Once or twice	Two or three times a month	About once a week	Several times a week
Received:					
Females	74.6	20.7	2.6	1.3	0.8
Males	79.2	16.3	2.4	0.8	1.3
TOTAL	77.7	17.7	2.4	1.0	1.2
Made:					
Females	91.6	7.3	0.6	0.2	0.3
Males	87.9	9.8	1.2	0.3	0.7
TOTAL	89.1	9.0	1.0	0.3	0.6

Reports of having received an aggressive or threatening telephone call from a user of a mobile 'phone exceeded one in five (22.3 per cent of the sample). (25.4 per cent of girls, and 20.8 per cent of boys). 10.9 per cent of the sample (8.4 per cent of girls, and 12.1 per cent of boys) reported having perpetrated this activity over the past couple of months.

6. Abuse on the Internet - Social Networking Sites

(a) Use of social networking web-sites

The use of social networking Internet sites was very frequent, with over three-quarters (76.6 per cent) of the sample having used Bebo (85.5 per cent of girls and 72.3 per cent of boys) and You Tube (76.2 per cent; 68.9 per cent of girls and 79.7 per cent of boys) within the past couple of months. Similar sites, such as My Space, Nimble and Face Book, were used by some, but to a far lesser extent (12.7 per cent, 4.7 per cent and 6.6 per cent respectively).

Table 7. Students' responses to the question, 'Have you used any of the following web-sites in the past couple of months?' (Percentages answering 'Yes').

<i>Student Category</i>	<i>Response Category*</i>				
	Bebo	You Tube	My Space	Nimble	Face Book
<i>Females</i>	85.5	68.9	14.6	6.2	9.3
<i>Males</i>	72.3	79.7	11.7	4.0	5.3
TOTAL	76.6	76.2	12.7	4.7	6.6

* = Participants could circle as many response categories as applied to them; hence, the row totals may not add up to 100 per cent.

(b) Abusive postings on social networking web-sites

Around one in eight students (12.3 per cent of the sample – 15.3 per cent of girls, and 10.9 per cent of boys) had had nasty web postings made about them on Internet sites over the past couple of months. However, only just over one in twenty students (6.1 per cent of the sample – 5.4 per cent of girls, and 6.4 per cent of boys) reported that they had posted nasty, aggressive, threatening or embarrassing things about others on Internet sites over the past couple of months.

Table 8. Incidence rates of abusive postings on social networking web-sites. Students' responses to the questions, 'Have you had nasty, aggressive, threatening or embarrassing things about you posted on the Internet in the past couple of months, and 'Have you posted nasty, aggressive, threatening or embarrassing things about others on the Internet in the past couple of months?' (Percentages)

<i>Student Category</i>	<i>Response Category</i>	
	Yes	No
Had nasty things posted about self:		
<i>Females</i>	15.3	84.7
<i>Males</i>	10.9	89.1
TOTAL	12.3	87.7
Posted nasty things about others:		
<i>Females</i>	5.4	94.6
<i>Males</i>	6.4	93.6
TOTAL	6.1	93.9

7. Other Forms of Cyber-Abuse

Some other forms of cyber-abuse were less frequent – having received or sent abusive e-mails were indicated by 6.2 per cent and 3.0 per cent of the sample respectively; having received or sent abusive messages in Internet chat-rooms were indicated by 9.5 per cent and 7.3 per cent of the sample respectively. However, abuse via Instant Messages was fairly

frequently reported – by 12.9 per cent of the sample as targets, and 8.4 per cent of the sample as perpetrators in the past couple of months.

Table 9. Incidence rates of other forms of cyber-abuse.

Student Category	Response Category				
	Not in the past couple of months	Once or twice	Two or three times a month	About once a week	Several times a week
Students' responses to the question, 'Have you received, or have you sent, a nasty, aggressive or threatening e-mail message in the past couple of months?' (Percentages).					
Received:					
Females	91.1	7.4	0.9	0.3	0.2
Males	95.0	3.4	0.6	0.6	0.3
TOTAL	93.8	4.7	0.7	0.5	0.3
Sent:					
Females	96.9	2.7	0.4	0	0
Males	97.1	1.7	0.2	0.2	0.8
TOTAL	97.0	2.0	0.3	0.1	0.5
Students' responses to the question, 'Have you received, or have you sent, a nasty, aggressive or threatening message whilst using an on-line chat-room in the past couple of months?' (Percentages).					
Received:					
Females	89.0	8.5	0.7	1.0	0.9
Males	91.2	6.6	0.6	0.4	1.1
TOTAL	90.5	7.2	0.6	0.6	1.0
Sent:					
Females	94.4	4.6	0.4	0.2	0.3
Males	91.9	5.9	0.7	0.4	1.1
TOTAL	92.7	5.5	0.6	0.4	0.8
Students' responses to the question, 'Have you received, or have you sent, a nasty, aggressive or threatening Instant Message in the past couple of months?' (Percentages).					
Received:					
Females	84.2	11.6	2.3	0.8	1.1
Males	88.6	8.8	1.0	0.5	1.0
TOTAL	87.1	9.7	1.5	0.6	1.1
Sent:					
Females	92.8	6.0	0.6	0.2	0.4
Males	90.7	6.7	0.8	0.3	1.3
TOTAL	91.6	6.5	0.7	0.3	0.9

8. Reporting Cyber-Bullying

(a) Responses to having been cyber-bullied (actual)

Table 10. Students' responses to the question, 'If you have been cyber-bullied in the past couple of months, how did you respond?' (Percentages).

Student Category	Response Category*									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10**
Females	75.4	11.8	2.1	6.3	1.9	1.9	7.7	5.2	3.9	4.4
Males	78.9	4.5	1.0	2.2	1.2	2.0	6.2	2.4	2.5	5.5
TOTAL	77.7	6.9	1.3	3.5	1.4	2.0	6.7	3.3	3.0	5.1

* = Participants could circle as many response categories as applied to them; hence, the row totals may not add up to 100 per cent.

** = Response Categories:

- 1 = Not in the past couple of months
- 2 = One or more school friends
- 3 = An adult at school
- 4 = My parent(s) / guardian(s)
- 5 = I wanted to tell someone, but I was afraid it would get worse
- 6 = I haven't told anybody
- 7 = I sent an angry response back
- 8 = I asked the person to stop
- 9 = I did not respond at all
- 10 = I did something else

(b) Responses to cyber-bullying (hypothetical)

Table 11. Students' responses to the question, 'If you were being cyber-bullied, who would you tell?' (Percentages).

Student Category	Response Category*				
	One or more friends	An adult at school	My parent(s) / guardian(s)	Someone else	I wouldn't tell anybody
Females	77.8	17.4	46.6	7.6	7.1
Males	60.7	12.8	35.0	6.4	14.8
TOTAL	66.3	14.3	38.8	6.8	12.3

* = Participants could circle as many response categories as applied to them; hence, the row totals may not add up to 100 per cent.

People who had been cyber-bullied rarely (about 6 per cent) reported it to adults at school; they were over twice as likely to do nothing at all, five times more likely to send an angry message back, and five times more likely to talk to a friend. This is a marked contrast to what members of the sample said they would do – hypothetically – if they were being cyber-bullied – 66.3 per cent said they would talk to a friend, and 14.3 per cent said they would report it to adults at school.

DISCUSSION

First of all, it should be noted that there are number of points upon which the principles of dealing with cyber-bullying coincide with those pertaining to dealing with more 'traditional' (i.e., non-cyber-) forms of bullying. In the first place, the so-called 'whole-school' approach (O' Moore & Minton, 2004; Smith, Pepler & Rigby, 2004; Ttofi, Farrington & Baldry, 2008), is still warranted. In the 'whole-school' approach it is acknowledged that the problem of school bullying is a complex, multi-layered one; consequently, a sophisticated, multi-level solution is appropriate. Hence, a series of co-ordinated and simultaneous interventions at the school management, school staff, parent and community and student levels is planned and undertaken. In other words, schools, parents, community interest groups, health, educational and psychological professionals, and young people themselves all have a role to play, as we have seen that Smith et al. (2006) have indicated. Additionally, as with all such interventions, awareness-raising of bullying and cyber-bullying as real problems is a key 'first step', and changing attitudes towards oppression and violence are outcome goals. In Ireland, a very real attempt at such co-ordinated activity has been undertaken by the NCTE in their 'Complete E-safety Programme' (Walsh, 2008). It is gratifying to see this sort of work complemented and encouraged at government departmental level; the establishment of both the Office for Internet Safety (Office for Internet Safety, 2008a) and the Internet Safety Advisory Council in 2008 (Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform, 2008), and the encouragement shown to these initiatives by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform, 2008) give grounds for a cautious optimism in terms of enhancing Internet safety.

However, and as we have noted above, cyber-bullying – compared with what has been variously termed 'conventional', 'traditional' or 'classic' bullying - does raise issues of its own. Li (2006) may be correct in referring to a 'new bottle, old wine' in terms of the reticence of targets of both 'traditional' and cyber-bullying to report the issue to teachers, but Vandebosch et al. (2006) are surely correct in their assertions concerning the important differences between the two. They refer to the lack of (perpetrator) repetition, technological power basis, the ease of adopting another identity, and the lack of facial / intonation feedback in instances of cyber-bullying (Vandebosch et al., 2006). To these observations, we would add the fact that in cases of cyber-bullying, those being targeted can be attacked (via electronic means) outside conventional space and time limits. A target of cyber-bullying does not even have to be on the same continent as the perpetrator of the attack. From the perspective of the target, a particularly frightening aspect of cyber-bullying is that there may be no 'safe place' – as long as the perpetrators have access to electronic media, their attacks (in terms of messages and postings) can be made. On a practical basis, as acts of cyber-bullying may take place outside of school hours and premises, it is often far from clear as to who has responsibility for the investigation and dealing with such incidents. Aside from restricting the use of mobile phones in schools and the blocking of certain web-sites from school computers, schools can be uncertain of as how to best play their role in countering and preventing cyber-bullying. So the actions of the NCTE in terms of their safety packs and programmes and teacher-training initiatives (Walsh, 2008) are particularly welcome.

In the case of the ready distribution of cyber-bullying material (for example, the posting of abusive messages or threatening / embarrassing material on the Internet, each episode of

bullying can reach a much wider ‘audience’ than ‘traditional’ forms of bullying. When one examines Smith et al.’s (2006) findings regarding the participants’ perceptions of the seriousness of the different types of cyber-bullying – i.e., that chat-room bullying, Instant Messaging bullying and E-mail bullying were perceived as having less impact than traditional bullying, but that video-clip bullying was perceived as having more – one gets the sense that the scale of embarrassment might underlie such perceptions. After all, chat-room, E-mail and IM communications are generally one-to-one, or small groups (additionally, with traceable sources), but a video-clip can be easily distributed by MMS or posted on a web-site, thus reaching a potential audience of millions.

Furthermore, as Vandebosch et al. (2006) have asserted, acts of cyber-bullying are easily hidden; and the fact of the matter is that potentially-intervening adults may be far less familiar with technical media than are the young people involved. It is to be expected that parents would have particular concerns about the issue of cyber-bullying. Hence, the third aspect of the NCTE complete Internet safety programme referred to above – NCTE / NPC collaboration on the provision of free Internet Safety speakers for parents’ evenings (Walsh, 2008) is a further welcome step.

So, intuitively and experientially, we can see that differences exist between ‘traditional’ and cyber-bullying. We have also seen how, perhaps as a consequence, that cyber-bullying-specific initiatives have been developed, and seen how some of these have been implemented in Ireland. As educators, the authors are keen to see such solutions being disseminated into the hands of those who most need such resources – teachers, parents and young people themselves. But as scientists, the authors are equally keen to see the ‘evidence-based practice’ approach that the forefather of anti-bullying research, Dan Olweus,¹² has so correctly insisted upon, prevail. So what can the survey reported upon in this chapter potentially add to what we know and can do regarding preventing and dealing with cyber-bullying in Ireland?

From Table Two and its accompanying text, it can be seen that in the present survey, around one in seven students (14.2 per cent; 18.1 per cent girls, and 12.3 per cent of boys) reported having been cyber-bullied over the past couple of months, whereas around one in eleven (8.7 per cent; 8.0 per cent of girls, and 9.1 per cent of boys) reported having taken part in the cyber-bullying of others at school within the past couple of months. Notwithstanding the obvious differences in age ranges and sample sizes, these figures compare favourably with those obtained in Qing Li’s 2006 study of 177 seventh graders in Canadian schools, where 25 per cent of the sample reported having been cyber-bullied; and 15 per cent reported having cyber-bullied others. However, it should also be noted that some 54 per cent of Li’s sample reported having been bullied (all types of bullying), and 33 per cent reported having bullied others. These figures certainly exceeded in the present survey, where 30.2 per cent of students (30.3 per cent of girls, and 30.1 per cent of boys) reported that they had been bullied at school in the past couple of months, and 24.9 per cent of students (11.5 per cent of girls, and 30.9 per

12 Many of Olweus’ recent publications demonstrate his emphasis on ‘the need for evidence-based intervention programmes’ (e.g., Olweus, 2003, 2004). Olweus cites the success of his own programme in satisfying both a US expert committee’s review of more than 500 programmes that address problematic behaviour (one of only eleven that did so) for so-called ‘Blueprint’ status, and a similar evaluation of 56 programmes in Norway (the only programme to do so) (Olweus, 2003, 2004). The criteria used by the US and Norwegian review committees were similar; essentially, programmes should show (i) ‘positive effects on relative target groups in a relatively rigorous scientific evaluation’; (ii) that the effects should have lasted ‘...for at least one year’; and, (iii) ‘that the programme had produced positive results in at least one site beyond the original one’ (Olweus, 2004, p. 13).

cent of boys) reported having taken part in bullying of others at school in the past couple of months.

Smith et al.'s sample of ninety-two 11-16 year-olds is more comparable to our own sample in age range, but again, not in numbers; furthermore, their findings are expressed in terms of having been cyber-bullied at all and having been frequently cyber-bullied. The best comparison for the present survey is with Vandebosch et al. (2006)'s study in Flanders, where one in ten reported having been victims, almost two in ten reported having been perpetrators, and about three in ten reported having been bystanders. An interesting factor that emerges is that in our own study, the number of apparent targets (one in seven) outweighs the number of apparent perpetrators (one in eleven), whereas the reverse is true in the Flemish study (one in ten versus two in ten respectively) (Vandebosch et al., 2006). This is somewhat unusual; in most large-scale studies of bullying (e.g. Minton & O' Moore, 2008; Olweus, 2004; O' Moore, Kirkham & Smith, 1997) including those undertaken in Flanders (Stevens & Van Oost, 1994, 1995; in Huygbregts, Vettenburg & D'Aes, 2003), the number of self-reported targets is greater than the number of self-reported perpetrators. Whether this general finding will hold true for studies of cyber-bullying as well as general bullying is something that only further broad-scale studies of cyber-bullying can tell us; for now, it is difficult to account for this difference in the outcome data of the current and the Flemish cyber-bullying studies.

Tables Three and Four and their accompanying text showed, as might have been expected from studies in California (Toppo, 2006) and the UK (Smith et al., 2006) that text-message bullying was a common type of cyber-bullying. In a previous study in Ireland, around one in ten of a sample of 2,354 3rd – 6th class primary school students (8.7 per cent of girls, and 10.8 per cent of boys) and over one in eight girls (13.3 per cent) and around one in ten boys (9.6 per cent) of a sample of 3,078 1st – 3rd year post-primary students responded 'yes' to the questionnaire item, 'other pupils have sent nasty text messages to me, or used mobile phones to get at me within the past three months' (Minton, 2006, 2007b). In the present survey, 16.5 per cent of students reported having received an abusive text outside of school in the past couple of months, and 10.7 per cent having sent such a message (see Table Three), with the 'in-school' figures being 8.7 per cent and 4.8 per cent respectively (see Table Four). It is also important to consider that 17.6 per cent reported that they had had embarrassing or nasty pictures or video clips taken of them, and that 15.9 per cent reported having taken such pictures or clips of others (see Table Five), and that reports of having received an aggressive or threatening telephone call from a user of a mobile 'phone exceeded one in five (see Table Six). With these findings in mind, the case is certainly apparent for efforts in countering cyber-bullying in Ireland being directed towards young users of mobile telephones, as well as the initiatives that exist for young Internet users (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2008; Office for Internet Safety, 2008a, 2008b; Walsh, 2008).

The case for targeting young users of the Internet, which is where the bulk of efforts in Ireland have been focussed in Ireland, has certainly been borne out by the findings of the current survey. In the first place, Table Nine shows that forms of cyber-abuse other than those that are mobile phone or Internet-based – i.e., E-mail, chat-room and Instant Messages – were less frequent. Secondly, we have already seen that the Webwise & Anchor survey (2007) showed that 69 per cent of 848 nine to sixteen year-old students in Ireland access social networking web-sites more frequently than three times per week, and one-third do so on a daily basis; the present survey (see Table Seven) bore out that the use of social networking Internet sites was very frequent indeed. Around three-quarters of the sample had used the two

most popular of these sites (76.6 per cent (85.5 per cent of girls, and 72.3 per cent of boys) having used Bebo, and 76.2 per cent (68.9 per cent of girls, and 79.7 per cent of boys) having used You Tube) within the past couple of months. The potential for on-line abuse occasioned by such widespread use of such sites would seem to have been actualised, as Table Eight showed that around one in eight students (12.3 per cent of the sample – 15.3 per cent of girls, and 10.9 per cent of boys) had had nasty web postings made about them on Internet sites over the past couple of months. Whether the lower number of self-reported perpetrators - 6.1 per cent of the sample – 5.4 per cent of girls, and 6.4 per cent of boys reported that they had posted nasty, aggressive, threatening or embarrassing things about others on Internet sites over the past couple of months – can be put down to a lower actual number of on-line bullies, or (optimistically) a social-desirability effect occasioned by young people having received the message that such behaviour is unacceptable¹³ is, unfortunately, not possible to establish.

Li (2006) found that most targets of both bullying and cyber-bullying did not report having been bullied, a finding that is general in anti-bullying research (see Smith, 2003; Smith et al., 1999; Smith, Pepler & Rigby, 2004, for reviews). The present survey again supports the idea of the ‘code of silence’ – Tables Ten and Eleven showed that whilst 14.3 per cent of that sample reported that they would report it to adults at school *if* they were cyber-bullied, only 6 per cent of those who *had* been cyber-bullied actually did so. It is instructive to note that people who had been cyber-bullied were five times more likely to send an angry message back, and five times more likely to talk to a friend than they were to report it to adults at school. Does this pattern not also perhaps point to perhaps a perception of greater self-efficacy, than teacher-efficacy, in terms of addressing on-line problem – an attitude that would seem to have some basis in the oft-expressed sentiment that ‘with technology, the kids are a step ahead?’ It has been argued that where young people do not feel confident in their school’s abilities to deal with bullying that they are unlikely to do so (O’ Moore & Minton, 2005). If this reasoning does indeed hold true, it would appear that initiatives that serve the function of bringing adults ‘up to speed’ (such as the NCTE post-service training course for teachers, Internet safety packs, Complete E-safety Programme and Internet Safety seminars for parents (Walsh, 2008) referred to above) would seem to very useful inclusions in efforts to counter and prevent cyber-bullying amongst young people in Ireland.

CONCLUSION

From the results of the present survey, taken in the context of work already undertaken to counter and prevent cyber-bullying amongst young people in Ireland, it is possible to offer the following points of recommendation for practice and research:

- The results of this survey show ‘traditional’ bullying to be a continued and significant problem in Irish schools, and cyber-bullying to be an emergent and significant problem amongst young people in Ireland. Therefore, and given the devastation to individuals and families that is sometimes caused by such behaviour, it

¹³ It is probably even more likely that the lower number of self-reported perpetrators than self-reported targets referred to here and elsewhere could be accountable for by reference to the self-preserving tendencies of those who bully.

would surely be only reasonable to expect that addressing all forms of bullying within school communities in Ireland would be a matter of priority for educators, policy-makers and legislators.

- Whereas the 'traditional' bullying models of the 'whole-school' approach can be built on in facing forms of bullying that rest upon technology, cyber-bullying does in fact raise issues of its own, including the fact that girls would appear to be over-represented in certain types. Even in the absence of further research, one could at least recommend at this point that parents and educators of girls be particularly vigilant regarding these sorts of behaviours.
- Internet-based and mobile phone-based bullying would seem, from the present survey, to be the most significant forms of cyber-bullying. The widespread use of social networking web-sites and high level of mobile phone ownership amongst this age group are surely contributory factors. Whereas resources exist for young people, parents and schools regarding Internet-based bullying (often in the more general context of Internet safety), targets of mobile phone-based bullying and their parents and teachers do not enjoy the same level of resource provision in Ireland. It is to be hoped that this issue would be addressed in the near future.
- Resource provision regarding cyber-bullying in Ireland has, to date, developed in the absence of broad-scale empirical research. It is gratifying that the findings of the present survey have, at many points, validated such efforts, as well as (for example, in the case of mobile phone-based bullying) sometimes highlighting gaps. It is to be hoped that a model of evidence-based practice could be worked towards in the continued efforts of researchers, educators, policy-makers and legislators in Ireland against technological forms of bullying behaviour.

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